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-----MEDIA RELEASE-----

**MAYOR EDDIE PEREZ WANTS TO HEAR HARTFORD
STUDENTS SAY, "I'M GOING TO COLLEGE"!**

(May 3, 2005)--- Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez, the Hartford Public Schools, and the Foundation for Excellent Schools are sponsoring the second annual Early College Awareness Day on May 3rd. More than 300 volunteers from the educational, community, and business worlds will visit more than 30 Hartford elementary, middle, and high schools. The goal is to prepare and inspire students for a 4-year college education.

Mayor Perez says, "We need to plant the seed for college at an early age. Our students need to know what courses to take to better prepare them for higher levels of education." Perez adds, "Education is the key to opening the doors of opportunity in our City, and in our society. About half of the jobs in Hartford today require at least a bachelor's degree. That number will only grow in the future, and Hartford students can not and will not be left out."

Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools, Robert Henry, believes, "It is never too early to start thinking about college. It is just as important for grade school youngsters to think and dream about the future, as it is for high school students."

Rick Dalton, President of FES, says, "The volunteers are Goodwill Ambassadors of Education. Their interaction with students through discussions, games, and other activities will leave a lasting impression on the students."

Early College Awareness Day is part of an all week focus at Hartford Public Schools to talk about the importance of higher education. Studies show that there's a \$1 million difference in lifetime earning potential between having a Bachelor's degree and only having a high school diploma. It is part of Mayor Perez's education initiative to increase the number of Hartford students graduating from a 4-year college program by 25-percent. Right now, only 10% of Hartford students attend a 4-year college full time.

For more information on the Mayor's role, contact Sarah Barr, Director of Communications at (860) 522-4888 x6217.

For more information on Early College Awareness Day in Hartford, contact Rick Dalton at (802) 462-3170.